1:Dobrizhoffer M-S (ca. 1780) 1822
814 Abipon 814
GUARANI 594

own eyes were he to see men, almost a hundred years old, leap on to a fiery horse, without the aid of a stirrup, like a boy of twelve years old, sit it for hours, and ever whole days, beneath a burning sun, climb trees for honey, travel or lie upon the ground in cold or rainy weather, contend with the enemy in battle, shrink from no toils of the army or the chase, evince wonderful acuteness both of sight and hearing, preserve all their teeth quite sound, and seem only to be distinguished by the number of their years from men in the prime of life. All these things will hardly be credited in Europe where they are so rare. In the colonies of the Abipones I daily beheld old men, like youths in every other respect but that of age, without surprize. If a man dies at eighty he is lamented as if cut off in the flower of his age. Women generally live longer than men, because they are not killed in war, and because the moistness of their nature renders them more long lived. You find so many old women a hundred years of age, amongst the Abipones, that you may wonder at, but will scarce be able to count them. I cannot say that the pedestrian nations of Paraguay enjoy equal strength and longevity. The Guaranies, Lules, Isistines, Vilelas, and other pedestrian Indians, are subject to diseases like the Europeans, and

1:Dobrizhoffer M-8 (ca. 1769) 1822
S14 Abipon S14

CHAPTER XXI.

OF THE DISEASES, PHYSICIANS, AND MEDICINES OF THE ABIPONES.

I HAVE long since described the Abipones to be stout, vigorous, and robust; and unless I am much deceived, have already proved in chapter the seventh, that the diseases, which in Europe fill houses with sick persons, and graves with dead bodies, are unknown here. Epilepsy, gout, lethargy, madness, jaundice, diseases in the joints, complaints in the kidneys, elephantiasis, iliac disorders, &c. are names strange and foreign to the Abipones. You scarce hear once in three years of any of them dying of a fever, pleurisy, or consumption. Sickness is more rare amongst them than an Aurora Borealis, or an eclipse with us. I never heard any of them complain of tooth-ache except an old woman, who soon stopped the pain with a few drops of vinegar. I do not wonder that the savages should be exempt from so common a complaint, as they are accustomed from childhood to chew tobacco leaves mixed with salt and the saliva of old women, and reduced into the form of an unguent. It is not improperly, therefore, that

1:Dobrizhoffer M-S (ca. 1760) 1822
514 Abipon 514

827 replies with a groan, it is in my heart: so that it is very difficult to understand from the Indians what their complaint is, and where it is situated, unless it be betrayed by other signs. Loathing
753 of food for ever so short a time is, in their
827 opinion, a certain indication of sickness. If an Abipon, from having overloaded his stomach, abstains from food for a little while, the women immediately augur the worst respecting him, and make no end of their lamentations, saying every now and then with a groan, *Chik rkeñe*, he does not eat. As soon as the sick person takes ever so little food, though the disorder be not yet subdued, they think him out of danger, so that *Là rkeñe*, he eats now; and *Là-yamini*, or *Là natatéuge*, now he is recovered, now he revives, are with them synonimous.
[164] Moreover, as the Abipones are but very seldom
165 sick, so very few of them die when they are sick. I do not doubt but that in the frequent conflicts they have with enemies and tigers, numbers fall yearly by the nails of the one, and the claws of the other. In most of the remainder, extreme old age is generally the fatal dis-
[165] ease. In a word, greatest part of the Abi-
761 pones die when they are satiated with life, when, weary of the burden of years, they long for death as the rest and solace of their miserable existence. This circumstance occasions

1 Dobrizhoffer M-S (ca. 1760) 1822
S34 Abipon S14
Guarani S34

A 164 disease during the two last centuries, defy all
G calculation. In the thirty Guarany towns some
[165] thirty thousand persons died of the small-pox
in the year 1734.

ooo It is not true that the Spaniards and other Europeans in America are exempted from small-pox; but it cannot be doubted that the Indians take it sooner, and more frequently die of it. I am of opinion that their habit of body has less strength to repel or overcome that poison. They generally eat half-raw and unsalted meat; they always go with their heads and feet bare; they drink nothing but water, and that not of the best kind, except at a few festive drinking parties in the course of the year; all which tend to weaken the stomach. The heat of the sun, and the constant use of maize, cause a ferment in their blood which, on the accession of small-pox, very frequently proves fatal. This must be understood of the pedestrian Indians only, for the Abipones, and other equestrian Indians, who do not labour under those miseries to which the pedestrians are subject, generally have the small-pox in a milder form.

A 164

G In the year 1765 this plague carried off great
A numbers in the Spanish colonies. Having swept
731 away about twelve thousand persons in the thirty
165 Guarany towns, it spread to the distant hordes
164 of the savages scattered throughout Chaco, and

1:Dobrizhoffer M-S (ca. 1760) 1822
S14 Abipon S14
GUARANI SM4

though almost all took the infection, yet few died in proportion to the number of the sick. I speak of the equestrians, who were saved by the strength of their constitutions. In the town which I founded for the Abipones, one woman only escaped the contagion, yet out of the many hundreds that took the disease, twenty alone fell victims to it.

Often no mention is made of the small-pox for many years amongst the Indians; but this calm is the sure forerunner of an approaching storm. We have always found the small pox break out first in the colonies of the Spaniards, and spread from thence to the farthest hordes of the Indians; who, having learnt from the experience of their ancestors, to dread this disease as their death, separate from their hordesmen as soon as ever they have the least suspicion of its approach, and fly, some one way, some another, in precipitate haste. Upon this occasion they travel not in a straight line, but by various meanders and windings. That this method is superstitiously observed by the Lules, Isistines, Vilelas, Homoampas, and Chunipies, I was told by Fathers who had resided long amongst them. Through fear of the contagion, fathers desert their sick sons, and sons their fathers. They leave a pitcher of water, and some roasted maize at the sick

1:Dobrizhoffer M-S (ca. 1760) 1822
514 Abipon 514

of Spaniards he had slain. Here it may be observed that the Americans, who have had the genuine small-pox, do not fear the return of it. At five years of age I had the small-pox so slightly, that I was marked in ten places only, and was ill but two days. Yet that this short sickness is, by the law of nature, sufficient, I was fully persuaded, after living many months, day and night, with Indians who had the disorder, without taking the infection.

Almost the same observations may be made on measles as on small-pox. It rages at intervals, spreads, and cuts off vast numbers in America. Whilst I resided in the town of St. Joachim, out of two thousand Indians so many were laid up with this disorder, that often none were left to supply the sick with food, water, wood and medicines. The offices due to the minds and bodies of the sick kept Father Joseph Fleischauer and myself occupied day and night for some months. That pestilence carried off two hundred persons, out of which number there were very few infants, and no old men, most of them being persons in the flower of their age. The tertian ague sometimes spreads like a contagion amongst the Indians, but is more troublesome than dangerous, and prevails only in those places where stinking ditch water is in constant use. For the same reason terr-